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CUTTING COSTS ON FARMS IN CENTRAL STATES

A radio talk by H. W. Gilbertson, Federal Extension Service, delivered in the Land Grant College program of the National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, February 15, 1933, and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.

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Since the prices of farm products began to tumble in 1921, midwest farmers have had several years of experience learning how to reduce costs. It has been a bitter fight against "Old Man Depression," especially since 1929. The attack has been made on three fronts: against overhead costs, against production costs, and even against the cost of living.

Farmers are reducing the overhead costs of operating their business by making their present machinery and equipment last longer.

They are attending extension meetings to learn more about repairing machinery. The 4-H club members are organizing "fix it" clubs.

Extension reports contain thousands of instances of farm families which have used information given by extension agents about cutting family living costs without reducing living standards. Missouri farm families that raised home gardens under extension leadership produced an average of \$1.17 worth of vegetables for the family table for each hour of labor put into garden work. Thousands of farm families are setting a good table with a cash expenditure for food of less than a dollar a week.

But I want to mention especially the ways in which farmers, with the help of scientific information, are cutting their costs of producing crops and livestock.

For one thing, they are planning their work so as to make more efficient use of labor and to cut down labor expense. They are turning more of their land to the production of feeds for livestock, especially legumes. Horses fed on cheap feed are taking the place of tractors requiring gas and oil at cash expense. That extends even to using horses for the necessary business trips to town.

Other methods which cut down the cost of producing a hundred pounds of livestock or a bushel of crops also are helping pull farmers of the middle west through this bitter period. Scientific methods that increase yields per acre without additional expense enable men to come closer to making a living. Here is an instance from Saunders County, Nebraska. Thirty-seven farmers of that county last year reported their cost of producing winter wheat. One group averaged 14 bushels per acre at a cost of 76 cents a bushel. But another group of neighboring farmers averaged 27 bushels per acre at a cost of only 39 cents a bushel.

Now some of the methods of decreasing the cost per bushel may increase the cost per acre and still pay. For instance, last year 14,000 Minnesota farmers cooperated with the Extension Service in using about 8 thousand tons of poison bait to protect more than a million acres of crops from grasshoppers. These

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Minnesota farmers who could not afford to lose their crops reported that they saved more than 9 million bushels of crops and more than 80 tons of hay as a result of the help of the Extension Service.

Reducing losses from livestock diseases is another method that cuts production costs. Swine sanitation, for example, not only reduces pig losses for Corn Belt farmers but also enables them to put their pigs on the markets at the most advantageous time. The men in the Corn Belt who followed the swine sanitation and feeding practices recommended by county agents last year saved at least a dollar a hundred by cutting the cost per pound of grain, and by getting their hogs to market when the highest spring and fall prices were paid. Those who kept their hogs a month or two longer had to sell for at least a dollar a hundred less.

Four hundred and twelve Missouri poultry raisers who followed the Grow Healthy Chicks plan recommended by the State Agricultural Extension Service reported a saving of \$9 each because of smaller losses of chicks in brooding. Missouri poultry raisers also saved a total of about 100 thousand dollars by using about five thousand tons of chick feeds mixed at home or by local feed dealers according to formula recommended by the Missouri Extension Service.

Economic production with a "Live-at-home" program will reduce losses to a minimum. When the upturn in prices does come, such practices established in the present period will help the midwest farmer pull through, pay his debts, and save some money.